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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR KHALILZAD'S OCT 13 MEETING WITH  
AFGHANISTAN SRSG EIDE

Classified By: Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad for reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

11. (S) Summary: SRSG for Afghanistan Kai Eide outlined to Ambassador Khalilzad a complex tapestry of opportunities and solutions for Afghanistan's tenuous situation, emphasizing the need to act now to shift the balance in our favor. He said that the October 11 cabinet re-shuffling by Afghanistan President Karzai strengthened Afghanistan-Pakistan bilateral ties, and the mild lull in violence provided by winter set the stage for achieving our objectives. He said the international community must match these opportunities by pushing forward with a concurrent "political surge," improved donor coordination, elections support, and progress on regional reconciliation efforts. Eide noted however, that the bureaucratic UN hiring system "kept him up at night" and significantly diminished UNAMA's ability to achieve its expanded mandate. Ambassador Khalilzad agreed that the new cabinet and change in Pakistan and Afghanistan were positive and told Eide that the U.S. would try to assist with bureaucratic bottlenecks posed by the United Nations. End Summary.

Cabinet reshuffling as window of opportunity  
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12. (S) In a meeting October 13 UN Special Representative for the Secretary General for Afghanistan Kai Eide described to Ambassador Khalilzad the long process leading to the recent Afghan government cabinet reshuffle, saying he spoke every week for five weeks to President Karzai. Noting Karzai's openness to dialogue, Eide added that the change in government was not only necessary but overdue, and in particular credited the appointment of Mohammad Atmar as the new Minister of Interior. He said that Atmar's new position would allow him to reinforce and support his close friendship with General Director for Local Governance Ghulam Jelani Popal, adding a positive dynamic to the Afghan government's ability to function. Ambassador Khalilzad agreed, noting similar harmony has also been established between the Ministries of Agriculture and Rural Development, as the new Agriculture Minister previously served as Deputy Minister of Rural Development. Eide stressed that the re-shuffle opened a window of opportunity to move forward now.

13. (S) Ambassador Khalilzad expressed his concern about the Afghan government's situation, noting that corruption, decline in support for the government from the Afghan population, the heightened sense of insecurity, and capital flight all negatively impacted the government's ability to achieve progress. Eide agreed that the population lacked confidence both in the Afghan government and the civilian and military components of the international community, but stressed their attitude and the situation could both be turned around between now and spring. He said that the winter would not reduce levels of fighting to the extent seen previously, but that a lull in the violence is expected, presenting an opportunity to capitalize on the recent positive shifts in Afghanistan-Pakistan relations and the newly formed cabinet.

## Afghanistan-Pakistan relations critical

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¶4. (S) Eide said that Afghanistan-Pakistan relations have taken a notable turn for the better, and efforts at dialogue must be supported, with the international community remaining firm and effective in its support of their bilateral talks. Ambassador Khalilzad responded that a strategy must be hashed out that takes advantage of the opportunity provided by the election of President Zardari, including finding a role for the UN to support the dialogue. Eide agreed, noting he had visited Pakistan in May when there was a reluctance to move forward, and that he needed to return again soon to take advantage of the opportunity posed by Zardari's election.

¶5. (S) Eide stressed that Pakistan has a critical role in reducing the terrorist threat and moving forward in Afghanistan. For the international community to build upon this new opportunity provided by Zardari's presidency, Eide offered, we must further strengthen the Pakistani Army and support Afghanistan-Pakistan bilateral dialogue, while avoiding upsetting the local Pakistani population. Eide added that the newly created Friends of Pakistan could be instrumental in supporting the regional players in fighting terrorism along the Afghanistan Pakistan border. Ambassador Khalilzad noted that the next meeting of the Friends of Pakistan is scheduled in a few weeks in the United Arab Emirates.

## International community coordination key

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¶6. (S) Eide lamented the "province-specific mentality" of donor countries, where donors focus piecemeal funds and efforts to achieve their narrow provincial goals to the detriment of the larger situation. Individual donor agendas cause delay, he said, and a unified, comprehensive approach to solving Afghanistan's problems is the key to supporting Afghanistan's efforts to turn the situation around. Eide said that Popal had asked back in June for the discussion to stop and implementation to begin, to no avail. Eide concluded that he hoped that the recent meeting UNAMA conducted with key donors had clarified concerns and that failed donor coordination was a thing of the past. Eide added that Karzai had complained to him about the US not assisting Popal, saying the US has not provided him the funds he needs to do his job. Eide noted that not only does the international community quarrel amongst itself, but that it requires Popal to negotiate with each donor government individually, which is wrong and as a system we must move away from. By developing a standardized agreement, the international community would reduce the burden on Popal and increase its effectiveness.

## Elections and reconciliation opportunities

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¶7. (S) Ambassador Khalilzad told Eide that Karzai expressed pessimism about holding elections in 2009, in particular lamenting the situation in Helmand province where the central government controls only three districts. Ambassador Khalilzad said he told Karzai that not holding elections would cause a crisis of legitimacy and could limit international support for Afghanistan in the future. Ambassador Khalilzad brought up the possibility of holding a Bonn II or another Loya Jirga to hash out the political process if elections are not feasible. Eide said he had noted the same problems, however he stressed that Karzai needs to stop talking about not holding elections, as his pessimism could become a self-fulfilling prophecy. Eide also suggested that the Loya Jirga in its current configuration would not be helpful, and mused that even if elections weren't possible, a political process leading to some sort of

"political event" which recognized consensus and brought legitimacy, could end the conflict.

18. (S) Eide said the political and military processes on their current course will not lead to sustainable results. If we want relevant results we have to talk to those who are relevant, those who are on the ground, he stressed, driving the situation. Eide added however that discussions now could provoke disarray, and give the Taliban and al-Qaeda the appearance of holding the upper hand. The pessimistic atmosphere must shift to optimism, Eide argued, in order to avoid perceptions that the Afghan government agreed to negotiations because of Taliban successes on the battlefield. Negotiations must appear to be on the government of Afghanistan's terms, Eide said, adding that discussions were still a long way ahead, and first steps include identifying a useful process and determining who to talk with and who they represent. Ambassador Khalilzad said that identifying the interlocutors who helped organize the successful September 21 Peace Day could be an important step forward.

UN bureaucracy keeps Eide up at night...

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19. (S) Appearing visibly frustrated, Eide described his difficulties working within the UN and its cumbersome hiring process. He said he wakes up in the middle of night, not because of the situation in Afghanistan but due to his inability to fill key positions. The UN, he complained, did not help him overcome challenges; rather it placed hurdles in front of him to leap over. He gave the example of attempting to hire an agricultural advisor to work with the newly appointed Minister of Agriculture in addressing Afghanistan's serious agricultural difficulties. He described how Canada had identified an excellent candidate and even offered to pay his salary. Yet the UN hiring system brought that effort to a halt, he said, and exemplified the delays in hiring staff that is undermining UNAMA's ability to fulfill its mandate. He also brought up rumors he had heard about taking away the special allowance given to UN employees in Afghanistan, noting that its removal would have a serious, negative, impact on morale and would further complicate his efforts to hire and retain qualified personnel. Ambassador Khalilzad assured him that we would work to ensure the special incentive remained in place.

Khalilzad